

HSC BRIEFING

23 January 1957

POLISH ELECTION ANALYSIS

- I. Orderly pre-Gomulka vote on 20 Jan exceeded regime's expectations.
 - A. Over 94% of voters went to polls (95.3% in '52).
 - B. Over 70% dropped unmarked ballots (thus voting "straight ticket").
 - C. Few except students exercised "right" to vote in secret (as law theoretically requires).
 - D. Heavy turnout attributable in part to Church support for Gomulka, mild weather; in part to fear Russians alone would benefit from boycott.
- II. New Sejm makeup will be as Party planned:
 - A. Over 51% of seats to PZPR (who entered only 32% of candidates).
 - B. Two other "National Front" members get 34% of seats (25.5% for Peasants, 8.5% for Democrats).
 - C. Remainder (some 15%) go to Catholics, non-Party "independents".
- III. Vote gives Gomulka strong hand to deal with Party dissidents, especially pro-Sov "Katolin" faction.
 - A. Already appointed new Ambassador to Moscow.
 - B. However, has postponed Party Congress (scheduled for spring) until '58.
 1. Suggests that Gomulka wants some time to consolidate position.

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NSC BRIEFING

23 January 1957

POLISH ELECTION ANALYSIS

- I. 20 Jan vote for new parliament (SEJM) has given overwhelming support to Gomulka. Great majority of Poles evidently realized that only the Russians would benefit if elections boycotted.
 - A. Mandate exceeded Gomulka's expectations:
 1. Over 90% of eligible voters participated.
 2. Only about 30% failed to vote the straight ticket.
 - B. Few voters except students exercised right to vote secretly, even though election law theoretically required secret vote.
 - C. Long experience with regimentation probably caused many voters to drop ballots in box without marking them, thereby voting for the preferred candidates.
 1. Two elements helpful in getting out the vote: Catholic Church support for Gomulka, mild weather.
 - D. All party leaders and key individuals who stood as candidates were elected.
 1. No disorders of any significance were reported.
- II. Composition of 459-seat parliament will be as planned by Gomulka regime:
 - A. 51% for the United Workers Party. This 14% drop from their present parliamentary total was intended by the Communists.
 - B. Some 34% of seats will be held by representatives of the two parties collaborating with the Communists in "National Front" (25½% for Peasant Party, 8½% for Democratic Party).

- C. The remaining 15% will be held by non-party and Catholic "independents".

III. Election victory has strengthened Gomulka's hand for suppression of disruptive elements within the party, especially the pro-Soviet Natolin faction.

- A. Gomulka is reported to have confided that he will now "take care of the party."
- B. Party rank-and-file, hitherto largely uncommitted, will now probably fall in line behind him.
- C. Appointment of a new ambassador to Moscow (21 Jan) may be the first of a series of shifts to place men Gomulka can trust in key positions.
 - 1. New ambassador, Tadeusz Gede, is experienced in orbit trade matters, and should ensure expert handling of Poland's vital economic relations with Sovs.
- D. However, Polish Party Congress (scheduled for late March or early April) has reportedly been postponed until 1958.
 - 1. Postponement indicates that, despite his new strength, Gomulka expects it will take some time to consolidate his position.

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BACKGROUND--POLISH ELECTION STATISTICS

I. COMPARISON	1952	(%)	1957	(%)
A. TOTAL SEATS IN SEJM:	435		458	
UNITED WORKERS' PARTY	273	(64.2%)	326	(51.5%)
PEASANT PARTY	90	(21.2%)	116	(25.4%)
DEMOCRATIC PARTY	25	(5.9%)	30	(6.5%)
INDEPENDENTS (NON-PARTY AND CATHOLIC)	37	(8.7%)	67	(14.6%)
B. PERCENTAGE OF ELIGIBLES VOTING:	95.3%		94.1%	
TOTAL ELIGIBLE VOTERS	16.3 million		17.9 million	
VOTES CAST	15.5 million		16.9 million	

II. "OPPOSITION VOTE": Polish State Electoral Commission released following figures to press 23 Jan:

A. Total votes cast: 16,592,213.

B. Votes against "National Front" candidates: 323,899 (under 2% of total).

C. In '52 election, only 36,000 such votes cast (2/10s of 1%).

III. Sidelight: although SEJM should total 459 seats, only 458 candidates were returned.

A. In Nowy Sack district, the 458th man (a United Workers' Party candidate) received sufficient scratch-offs to put him under the 50% of votes cast required for election.

B. Runoff election will be held.

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